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Looking at the U.S.

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Revitalizing the CIA

A renewed interest in clandestine action

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Morale is looking up among the 60,000-strong spy force at the Central Intelligence Agency's Langley, Va., headquarters. Promises of a \$10-billion-budget this year, a major recruiting drive, and a favorable change in public attitude that reached an alltime low during the post-Vietnam Watergate depression have restored some of the agency's strength.

The publication of a report that the CIA had been planning a "destabilization campaign" against Libyan strongman Muammar Gaddafi has provided the first public inkling that the Reagan Administration is rebuilding the CIA into an active arm of foreign policy. It was inevitable that the "hot" covert action issue would draw fire to whoever was appointed to implement the President's decision—as it has to director William Casey.

The White House has denied that the reported plans for an African "operation" concerned Libya. But such a move against a regime that the Administration has branded as a pariah State for its international terrorism and destabilization campaigns against neighboring countries is precisely the kind of activity the Reagan Administration would encourage its CIA chief to consider.

At its inception the CIA may have aimed to monitor and counter what Americans perceived as a threat of Stalinist dictatorship. In many eyes it has ended up helping dictatorships into power and funding terroristic "Third World liberation movements." A group of talented amateurs ran American intelligence after World War II; later there was a wholesale desertion of talent from the agency in the wake of the scandals, Congressional investigations, and purges of the 1970s.



Casey—"would draw fire."

Months after his appointment by President Carter—saw the departure of hundreds of the CIA's most highly trained and experienced intelligence operatives throughout the world. Over the past decade the agency's staff has been chopped 25 per cent, with the average number of clandestine operations dropping to thirty a year in the 1970s compared with some 300 throughout the freewheeling 1950s and 1960s.

A former top operative, Theodore Shackley, says the agency's capacity to carry out such operations has "withered into virtual hopelessness," and that it will take at least three years to train a new

cadre of work for laid by Pagan Adm

In Oct the 1974 I had shut intelligence services to cooperate with the CIA by forcing it to inform no fewer than eight subcommittees of any covert operation. That system has now been streamlined to two select committees—one each for the Senate and the House.

Congress is now also expected to exempt the CIA from the far-reaching U.S. freedom of information laws, although citizens and resident aliens will still be able to seek records "concerning themselves" under the Privacy Act. It will also become a crime to disclose the names of undercover agents working abroad.

Although the changes in the freedom of information laws have been opposed by newspaper groups, measures to bolster the CIA have received extraordinarily little public criticism. With very few exceptions, Congress has supported the post-Iran, post-Afghanistan public mood that saw most liberal representatives of the mid-1970s anti-CIA movement swept from office last November. Conservative Sen. Barry Goldwater's role in the anti-Casey movement is also dramatizing the fact that the "anything goes" days of the 1950s and 1960s are gone.

The Reagan Administration will almost certainly move quickly to dispel illusions that the link between the scheme for an operation "somewhere" in Africa and the Casey controversy will embarrass it out of its ambitious plans. While the agency's activities are to be hidden from the public spotlight, the Administration has made its intentions clear with requests to Congress that it lift the 1975 Clark Amendment banning covert aid to pro-Western groups in Angola.

Angola is an almost ideal test-case for the new policies, pitting overextended Soviet-supported Cuban troops against an anti-Communist native force—Jonas Savimbi's Unita movement. Despite the growing sympathy in Washington for Unita, any covert action by the Reagan Administration to equip it with modern weapons to overthrow the Angolan Government has so far been defeated by liberals of the subcommittee on Africa.

The impasse over the Clark Amendment is a remarkable confrontation between the new attitude to the CIA and that of the mid-1970s.